

JOHN & JAMES DOBSON CARPET MILL (WEST PARCEL),  
BUILDING NO. 25  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5383- V

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA,  
695V-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
Mid-Atlantic Regional Office  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA,  
695V-

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**  
**JOHN AND JAMES DOBSON CARPET MILL (West Parcel), BUILDING 25**  
**HABS No. PA-5383-V**

Location:

4041-4055 Ridge Avenue  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

Present Owner:

Rouse Urban Housing, Inc.  
1500 Walnut Street, 19th Floor  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

Present Occupant:

Mixed commercial and industrial tenants.

Significance:

Built in 1874/75, Building 25 was one of the first structures, following the water tower of Building 1, to be constructed with brick segmental arches over the windows. The later additions to the building are a good document of the incremental expansion used by the Dobsons to enlarge their facilities. The building's less prominent location on the site and simple construction indicate its use as a secondary building in the line of textile production.

## **PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

### **A. Physical History**

#### **Date(s) of Erection:**

Circa 1874/75 with circa 1890 addition and twentieth-century alterations. The building appears on the 1877 Hexamer Survey. This survey of Mill No. 4 clearly documents the construction date and specifications for Building 24. However, it is unclear if the description pertains to Building 25 as well. Due to the building's lesser role in the operation of the mills, it is possible that it did not merit much discussion in the survey.

#### **Architect:**

Unknown.

#### **Original/Subsequent Owners:**

See Chain of Title.

#### **Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:**

Unknown.

#### **Original Plans/Construction:**

Building 25 was erected prior to 1877, most likely in 1874/75, as a one-story, rectangular rubblestone building with a tin roof. Unlike earlier buildings on the site, brick segmental arches were used above the windows. The building, which functioned as a rag picker and rag storehouse for the complex, was part of Mill No. 4, used for cloth and blanket manufacturing.

#### **Alterations/Additions:**

Circa 1890, a two-story stone addition was added to the northern end of the building. This building has been extensively altered throughout the twentieth century- all of the windows have been infilled and the north gable end has been reconstructed and stuccoed.

### **B. Historical Context**

Building 25 was originally part of the complex known as Mill No. 4 on the west parcel of the Dobson site. It, in conjunction with Building 24, documents the growth of the mill in its third phase of expansion. The building's smaller scale and less visible location however,

designate it as one of the auxiliary buildings to the site, not housing primary mill or factory facilities.

## **PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

### **A. General Statement**

#### **Architectural Character:**

Building 25 was constructed in the same mill character as the earlier structures on the site with local schist stone, regularly spaced fenestration and a low gable roof. The use of brick arches over the windows date the building to the mid-1870s, a feature which was consistently used throughout the site.

#### **Condition of Fabric:**

The masonry is in fair condition but suffers from the erosion of mortar joints. The interior framing of the building has been severely fire damaged.

### **B. Description of Exterior**

#### **Overall Dimensions:**

First floor- 131' x 46', second floor- 48.4' x 46.4'.

#### **Foundations:**

Rubblestone.

#### **Walls:**

Rubblestone, north elevation-gable has been reconstructed and is stuccoed concrete masonry unit, two iron clamps in the rubble indicate tie rod locations which reinforce the framing. Walls terminate with modern wood bargeboard and metal flashing.

#### **Structural System/Framing:**

Masonry construction with heavy timber framing now reinforced with iron tie rods.

#### **Porches/Stoops/Balconies/Bulkheads:** None.

Chimneys:

None.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

North elevation- none. East elevation- modern entrance in one-story section, two openings in two-story section. South elevation- garage door under an exposed steel lintel, missing loading dock. West elevation- central entrance under brick segmental arch, two doors in two-story section, one under brick segmental arch, one under steel lintel, second story window altered to doorway, now infilled.

Windows/Shutters:

All of the openings are regularly spaced, brick segmentally arched windows which have been infilled with concrete masonry unit and stuccoed, North elevation- four bays. East elevation- four windows. South elevation- three windows. West elevation- thirteen bays of windows.

Roof:

Both sections of the building are capped with a low-pitched gable roof. The roof of the northern section retains most of its original truss, wooden tie beams and rafters. A large section of this roof has been rebuilt due to extensive fire damage. The southern section of the roof has been entirely rebuilt and is carried on pre-fabricated wooden trusses.

**C. Description of Interior**

Floor Plans:

Two rectangular spaces divided by a masonry fire wall and a central row of piers supporting the ties of the open roof truss. Northern section rises two stories without intermediate floors, southern section is divided by plywood partitions.

Stairways:

None.

Flooring:

Unfinished wood floors.

Wall/Ceiling Finishes:

Plastered rubblestone walls have been water and fire damaged, ceilings are exposed timber and planking with steel reinforcements.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

No surviving original or historic interior doors.

Windows:

All windows recessed wood sills.

Decorative Features and Trim:

N/A

Hardware:

Original hardware, which is no longer extant, is presumed to have been utilitarian in character.

Mechanical Equipment:

Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: See PA-5383-C for heating system, air conditioning is N/A, ventilation is N/A.

Lighting: Modern, ceiling mounted, lighting.

Plumbing: N/A.

**D. Site**

General Setting/Orientation:

Building 25 is located on the northeastern portion of the Dobson site between the earlier mill buildings along Scott's Lane and the Carpet Mill in the center of the complex. The building's construction reflects the change in grade at this location of the site. Its primary elevation faces west. Building 25 is not prominent or visible from most locations on the site, an indication of its lesser role in the production operations at the mill.

Historic Landscape Design:

See Historic Context Section.

Outbuildings:

N/A.